



Florida House of Representatives

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Statement by **House Democratic Leader Franklin Sands**

On behalf of the Florida House Democratic Caucus, I write to express concerns about recent reports in the press involving House Speaker Ray Sansom's alleged private dealings with public money.

Our caucus members are troubled by news accounts that suggest the normal and open budget procedures may not have been followed in some circumstances in the last two years.

We do not aim to embarrass a colleague. But we think the Speaker should address these reports. If left to fester, the allegations may cast a haze over the Legislature and its work.

With much respect for his service and his office, we encourage Speaker Sansom to respond to media inquiries about state spending. We urge him to be forthright about his involvement with Northwest Florida State College, and to answer reporters' questions about how he has handled the appropriations process.

The sooner the public hears straightforward answers, the sooner we can focus on the people's priorities.

In this period of economic strife, many will seek the friendly hand of state government. Middle-class Floridians are worried about their jobs and families this holiday season. Floridians will expect leaders in the Legislature to guard against wasting precious resources. Florida House Democrats will work in bipartisan fashion with Governor Charlie Crist and Republican leaders to improve the state.

By providing answers to the public, Speaker Sansom can avoid creating an impression that leadership is about using power to seed the state budget with favors for personal friends or political donors. We want to work with him to show that leadership is about statesmanship and solving problems in open dialogue.

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